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MONTANA FEDERAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICAL SERVICE

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BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

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BOX 1726

HELENA, MONTANA

RELEASED: March 22, 1951

MONTANA PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1951

On March 1 Montana farmers and ranchers expressed their intentions to seed 5,897,000 acres to principal crops this spring, which compares with plantings of 5,589,000 acres in 1950. With the release of acreage controls, the plantings of spring wheat are indicated to be the largest of record. To attain the sharp increase in spring wheat plantings, acreages would be diverted from virtually all other spring planted crops.

Farmers and stockmen have good reserves of feed grains and hay which resulted from large crops last year and the relatively mild weather during the winter. Thus, despite an increase in livestock numbers, the local need for feed production is less than a year ago when feed stocks were quite low. Supplies of soil moisture are generally favorable for seed germination and early growth of spring planted crops. Rainfall during the 1950 growing season was above normal which would leave a good supply of subsoil moisture and topsoils throughout the State will be wet from the late winter snowfall.

WHEAT: Prospective 1951 plantings of spring wheat reported March 1 were indicated to be 4,568,000 acres. This would be a 20 percent increase over the 3,807,000 acres seeded last year. Last fall 1,593,000 acres of winter wheat were seeded which added to the expected spring wheat plantings totals 6,161,000 acres of all wheat. A year ago, the gross plantings of all wheat amounted to 5,232,000 acres. Usually, most of the abandoned winter wheat acreage is reseeded to spring wheat, therefore, the prospective spring wheat plantings may include approximately 150,000 to 200,000 acres of abandoned winter wheat land.

FEED GRAINS AND FLAX: Farmers and ranchers expressed their intentions to decrease their acreage of barley 38 percent, oats 17 percent and corn 4 percent below last year's planted acreage. If these intentions are fulfilled, the barley acreage will be 538,000 acres, oats 435,000 and corn 204,000 acres. These feed grains would total 1,177,000 acres compared with 1,605,000 acres last year. Flaxseed plantings are expected to be made on 65,000 acres, a 13 percent reduction from the 75,000 acres planted in 1950.

OTHER PLANTED CROPS: Moderate reductions are indicated for all row crops. Dry bean acreage is indicated to be 13,000 acres, a decrease of 3,000 from last year. Dry pea plantings of 5,000 acres would be down 1,000 acres. Prospective sugar beet plantings of 56,000 acres would be 15 percent below the 66,000 acres planted in 1950. Potato growing has been discouraged and plantings are indicated to be 13,000 acres, a reduction of 1,400 acres from last year.

MONTANA: PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1951

CROP	AVERAGE 1940 - 1949			A C R E S P L A N T E D		
	Acres	Yield per Pl. Acre		Indicated	1951 as %	
	Planted	Amount	Unit	1950	1951	of 1950
	(1,000 acres)			(1,000 acres)	(1,000 acres)	(Percent)
Corn.....	200	15.3	Bu.	213	204	96
Spring Wheat...	2,913	14.6	"	3,807	4,568	120
Oats.....	456	27.1	"	524	435	83
Barley.....	613	23.9	"	868	538	62
Flaxseed.....	224	6.1	"	75	65	87
Beans, dry.....	28	1,157	Lbs.	16	13	81
Peas, dry.....	31	1,122	"	6	5	83
Sugar Beets....	74	10.9	Tons	66	56	85
Potatoes.....	17.0	124	Bu.	14.4	13	90
All Hay 1/.....	2,191	1.19	Tons	2,601	2,497	96

1/ Data for all hay relates to acres for harvest.

P. J. Creer, Agr. Statistician In Charge
Lyman W. Wallin, Agr. Statistician

U. S. PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS, MARCH 1951

Much uncertainty is apparent in reported plans of farmers for the 1951 crop season. A relatively large acreage of spring planted crops is now in prospect -- 275½ million acres for the 17 crops now estimated, compared with 280 million in 1950. However, greater shifts among crops may occur following this report than is usual. A major reason may be shifts toward the Department's acreage guides, details of which generally had not reached individual farmers by March 1. Spring activities were at about usual stages on March 1, but may have been retarded by March storms. Soil moisture is mostly satisfactory, except in a large Southwestern area extending to southern California. Irrigation water supplies are adequate in northern areas, but taper to very poor, especially in New Mexico and Arizona.

Much of the decline from last year in the acreage of the 17 crops currently estimated is offset by the much larger acreage sown to wheat last fall. Furthermore, although cotton acreage is not covered in current reports by farmers nor in the estimates, growers appear to be keeping in mind well-known needs for an increase in the cotton crop. Declines from 1950 acreages are now planned for oats, barley, sorghums, flax, hay, soybeans, potatoes, cowpeas, sweetpotatoes, peanuts and sugar beets. Increases are in prospect for corn, spring wheat, rice, tobacco, dry beans and dry peas, all but the last of which were under acreage allotments in 1950.

Comparisons between prospective plantings and the 1951 acreage guides can be made for 11 field crops. However, the guides had only general publicity up to the time farmers reported upon their plans and little was known of their application at the county and individual farm level. Prospective acreages exceed the acreage guides in 5 instances: dry beans and potatoes each by 2 percent, spring wheat by less than 1 percent, rice by 1½ percent and oats by 1 percent. Falling short of the guide acreages are prospective acreages of corn by 5 percent (4.3 million acres), barley by 14 percent, probable soybeans for beans by about 7 percent, probable sorghum for grain by 5 to 8 percent, sweetpotatoes by nearly 23 percent and flaxseed by 2 percent. While some shifts are probable, these comparisons tend to indicate a reluctance among farmers to disrupt their current programs embracing grasslands, small grain operations on the extensive rather than intensive scale, and proven cash crops such as the oilseeds.

C R O P	P L A N T E D A C R E A G E S			
	Average	1950	Indicated	1951 as
	1940-49	1950	1951	pct. of 1950
	Thousands			Percent
Corn, all.....	89,481	84,370	85,694	101.6
All spring wheat.....	18,672	18,509	21,350	118.1
Durum.....	2,682	2,814	2,894	102.8
Other spring.....	15,990	15,695	18,956	120.8
Oats.....	43,510	46,642	44,191	94.7
Barley.....	14,281	13,235	11,413	86.2
Flaxseed.....	4,150	4,064	3,921	96.5
Rice.....	1,533	1,620	1,931	119.2
Sorghums for all purposes.....	16,024	16,587	12,540	75.6
Potatoes.....	2,625	1,866	1,590	85.2
Sweetpotatoes.....	672	573	444	77.5
Tobacco 1/.....	1,613	1,594	1,745	109.5
Beans, dry edible.....	2,023	1,632	1,664	102.0
Peas, dry field.....	508	240	244	101.7
Soybeans 2/.....	12,266	14,704	13,772	93.7
Cowpeas 2/.....	2,043	1,089	941	86.4
Peanuts 2/.....	3,666	2,752	2,614	95.0
Hay 1/.....	74,845	75,741	75,656	99.9
Sugar beets.....	828	1,013	887	87.6

1/ Acreage harvested. 2/ Grown alone for all purposes.

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